

WASHINGTON TIMES  
19 August 1987

## Discredited Green Beret used by Tass?

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

STAT The official Soviet news agency Tass yesterday alleged the Reagan administration carried out secret training of Afghan guerrillas on U.S. territory — but it appeared to be quoting a former Green Beret whose reputation for veracity has been questioned in the United States.

The Soviet Union previously accused the United States of sending advisers to Pakistan, where many rebel groups are based, but the recent Tass report was believed to be the first Soviet allegation of Afghan guerrilla training on U.S. soil.

Tass quoted "James Greitz, a retired lieutenant colonel who served with the U.S. special forces," as saying a representative of the Reagan administration asked him early last year to organize accelerated training for several Afghan rebel groups in the Nevada desert near Las Vegas.

Tass described "Col. Greitz" as a 30-year veteran of the U.S. Special Forces who had led more than 100 "special operations" during the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.

Tass did not say where the statement was made. But the description of the officer appeared to fit James G. "Bo" Gritz, a former Green Beret lieutenant colonel who in 1983 led an unsuccessful civilian raid into Laos to free American POWs.

Mr. Gritz afterwards told a House subcommittee he was certain Americans still were held there. But his appearance aroused the curiosity of a former special forces sergeant, Charles F. Hiner of Fayetteville, N.C.

Mr. Hiner had heard speeches by the former Green Beret colonel about his participation in an heroic December 1965 battle in the Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam. Mr. Hiner furnished The Washington Times with official Army records showing that the battle described by Mr. Gritz was in January 1966, was in a different location and Mr. Gritz was not among the 17 Americans who fought in it.

Charles Beckwith, the retired Army colonel who led the 1980 desert raid into Iran ordered by President Jimmy Carter, was a special forces major in Vietnam in 1966. He backed up Mr. Hiner's story that Mr. Gritz was not in the battle described.

STAT Mr. Gritz later admitted, "I wasn't part of that mission." He said it was a "composite" of action he had seen in Vietnam.

A member of the Laos raid led by Mr. Gritz later described it as a "farce" and Mr. Gritz was expelled from an association of former Green Berets because of his highly publicized forays into Laos.

In June 1983, the Reagan administration rejected a request Mr. Gritz be included in a California veterans delegation visiting the White House.

Tass yesterday quoted "Col. Greitz" as saying instructors of the Afghan rebels were helped by two men who had connections with the Office of the Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance and the CIA and by a State Department consultant.

It quoted him as saying one of the aims of the operation was to try to unite separate rebel groups into a single front.

"The course consisted of 55 'subjects' and included secret operations, intelligence, communications, demolition, anti-aircraft measures and man-to-man fighting," Tass said.

It said the U.S. Defense Department had provided modern equipment and hardware from the Fort Ord military base in California and a Coast Guard airfield in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Afghan Moslem guerrillas have received military aid from the United States, Pakistan, Iran and other countries in their war against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul.

STAT The Soviet Union has 115,000 troops in Afghanistan helping the Afghan army fight the rebels, according to Western experts.

• This article is based in part on wire service reports.